

## Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL TORONTO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4583

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

UNCLAS TORONTO 2154

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SOPN, CA

SUBJECT: TORONTO STAR SAYS POLITICAL LEADERS TAKE FALSE COMFORT IN  
QUEBEC SITUATION

REF: TORONTO 2149

1. IN THE SECOND OF A 5 EDITORIAL SERIES ON QUEBEC AFTER THE  
ELECTION, THE NOVEMBER 29 TORONTO STAR LEAD EDITORIAL "FALSE  
COMFORT ABOUT QUEBEC" CLAIMED CANADA'S POLITICAL LEADERS ARE DIS-  
PENSING "FALSE COMFORT ABOUT QUEBEC." THE PAPER STATED THAT  
SUCH REASSURANCES ARE BASED ON "TWO FRAGILE PIECES OF EVIDENCE:  
(A) THAT THE PARTI QUEBECOIS PLAYED DOWN SEPARATISM IN ITS  
ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND (B) THAT A PRE-ELECTION POLL SHOWED 58 PER  
CENT OF QUEBEC VOTERS AGAINST SEPARATION AND ONLY 18 PER CENT  
FOR IT, A FIGURE WHICH DROPPED TO 11 PER CENT IN A POST-ELECTION  
POLL. FROM THESE FACTS IT IS DEDUCED THAT QUEBEC VOTED FOR GOOD  
GOVERNMENT, NOT FOR INDEPENDENCE. THEREFORE SEPARATISM IS NOT  
IMMINENT, AND CANADA CAN AFFORD TO TAKE A WAIT-AND-SEE  
ATTITUDE. THIS IS LIKE IGNORING A FIRE IN THE BASEMENT OF A  
HOUSE BECAUSE IT HASN'T REACHED THE LIVING ROOM YET."

2. THE STAR POINTED OUT THAT THREE SUCCESSIVE LIBERAL AND  
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UNION NATIONALE GOVERNMENTSIN QUEBEC ALL PUSHED HARD FOR MORE

AUTONOMY AND REINFORCED THE UNIQUENESS OF QUEBEC, EVIDENCING THAT "THIS IS NO PASSING MOOD OR WHIM; IT IS THE URGE OF A PEOPLE WHO FEEL THEMSELVES TO BE A NATION, EVEN IF THEY DO NOT YET HAVE A NATION-STATE OF THEIR OWN."

3. THE EDITORIAL CLAIMED THAT TO SUPPOSE THAT THE PQ GOVERNMENT WILL DROP THE INDEPENDENCE ISSUE IS NAIVE. IT STATED THAT WHILE THE PQ MAY HAVE SOFT-PEDALED SEPARATISM IN THE CAMPAIGN AS AN ELECTION TACTIC, THE LEVESQUE GOVERNMENT CAN BE EXPECTED "TO TRY TO TURN EVERY ENCOUNTER BETWEEN ITSELF AND OTTAWA TO THE ADVANTAGE OF SEPARATISM. IF OTTAWA YIELDS LESS MONEY OR TAX ROOM THAN QUEBEC ASKS, IT WILL BE ACCUSED OF PUNISHING QUEBEC. IF OTTAWA GIVES GENERAOUSLY, IT WILL BE ACCUSED OF TRYING TO BUY LOYALTY TO FEDERALISM."

4. THE STAR CONTINUED THAT NOT ONLY CAN ELECTION AND POLL STATISTICS BE INTERPRETED IN MANY WAYS BUT FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE ONLY 11 PER CENT OF QUEBECKERS MAY BE FOR SEPARATION NOW, OTHER POLLS HAVE FOUND THAT MORE THAN HALF THINK QUEBEC COULD MAKE IT EOCNOMICALLY AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE.

5. THE EDITORIAL ENDS WITH "NO, SEPARATISM WON'T GO AWAY. IT CAN ONLY BE FORESTALLED BY OVERHAULING THE PRESENT FEDERAL STRUCTURE IN A WAY THAT IS ACCEPTABLE BOTH TO ENGLISH-SPEAKING CANADA AND TO A LARGE MAJORITY OF QUEBEC FRENCH CANADAINS."  
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